

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MANILA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY

INFO USDEL SECRETARY PRIORITY

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 179278 TOSEC 080158

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SEATO

SUBJECT: FUTURE OF SEATO

1. U.S. POSITION. WITH RESPECT TO THE RECENT AUSTRALIAN APPROACH TO SEATO MEMBERS PROPOSING THE DISSOLUTION OF SEATO AND THE KHUKRIT-MARCOS COMMUNIQUE CALLING FOR THE PHASING OUT OF THE ORGANIZATION, OUR BASIC POSITION WILL BE TO ACCEDE TO THE DISMANTLING OF THE SEATO MACHINERY SHOULD ALL SEATO MEMBERS INCLUDING THAILAND AGREE TO THIS COURSE, WHILE MAINTAINING THE UNDERLYING MANILA PACT. THE THAI VIEWS ON SEATO WILL BE CRUCIAL TO OUR OWN APPROACH TOWARDS
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ITS FUTURE. WE DO NOT INTEND TO PRESS THE THAIS OR OTHER

SEATO MEMBERS ONE WAY OR THE OTHER AND BELIEVE THAILAND SHOULD NOT BE SUBJECTED TO PRESSURE FROM OTHER NON-ASIAN ALLIES.

2. PRESENT SITUATION. THE WORDING OF THE KHUKRIT-MARCOS COMMUNIQUE AND ESPECIALLY THE SUBSEQUENT STATEMENTS BY THE PHILIPPINE AND THAI OFFICIALS INDICATE THEY WANT TO MAKE SOME ADJUSTMENTS IN REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN ORDER TO CONFORM TO CURRENT POLITICAL REALITIES IN THE AREA. SUCH CHANGES WILL UNDOUBTEDLY INVOLVE SEATO BUT HOW FAR THEY MAY WISH TO PUSH THE SEATO ORGANIZATION TOWARD ITS DEMISE AT THIS TIME IS STILL UNCLEAR. THE WORDING OF THE COMMUNIQUE WOULD APPEAR TO CALL FOR THE PHASING OUT OF THE SEATO MACHINERY WITHOUT AFFECTING THE UNDERLYING MANILA PACT. IN ADDITION MARCOS' WORDS AT THE COMMUNIQUE SIGNING THAT THE "PHASE OUT" SHOULD BE "IMPLEMENTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DICTATES OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES AS THEY OCCUR" WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE LITTLE OR NO IMMEDIATE PRESSURE FOR SEATO'S DISSOLUTION.

3. ACTION REQUESTED: BANGKOK AND MANILA: IF THE SUBJECT OF THE SEATO PORTION OF THE COMMUNIQUE ARISES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH HIGH LEVEL HOST OFFICIALS GOVERNMENT, THE THAI AND FILIPINOS SHOULD BE ASSURED THAT HAVING READ THE COMMUNIQUE WE HAVE NO OBJECTION TO THEIR STATEMENTS ON SEATO AND WISH FURTHER INFORMATION AND THEIR CONSIDERED VIEWS ON THE FUTURE OF SEATO. FURTHER, WE HOPE THAT WE WOULD HAVE THE BENEFIT OF THEIR THINKING SO THAT THERE MIGHT BE A THOROUGH REVIEW OF THE MATTER AT THE FALL SEATO COUNCIL MEETING. BANGKOK SHOULD ALSO INQUIRE AS TO WHETHER THAIS WILL ACCEPT CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE 20TH COUNCIL MEETING AS AGREED TO LAST YEAR.

4. FOR CANBERRA, WELLINGTON AND LONDON: IF APPROPRIATE LEVEL OFFICIALS RAISE SEATO WITH YOU, EMBASSY SHOULD DRAW ON INFORMATION CONTAINED IN PREVIOUS PARAS, POINTING OUT OUR POSITION IS BASICALLY TO WAIT FOR THE CONSIDERED JUDGMENT FROM THE ASIAN MEMBERS OF SEATO, ESPECIALLY THAILAND, ON THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE OF SEATO. WE BELIEVE THE SEATO COUNCIL MEETING THIS SEPTEMBER WOULD BE AN APPROPRIATE

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FORUM FOR A DETAILED DISCUSSION OF THE MATTER. YOU SHOULD OBSERVE THAT THE KHUKRIT-MARCOS COMMUNIQUE CALLS FOR A "PHASING OUT" OF THE SEATO ORGANIZATION RATHER THAN ITS TERMINATION. EMBASSY SHOULD STATE THAT IF ALL MEMBERS INCLUDING THAILAND, BELIEVE THAT THE SEATO ORGANIZATION SHOULD BE DISSOLVED, WE WOULD AGREE. WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF THE UNDERLYING MANILA PACT IS NOT BEING QUESTIONED BY ANY MEMBER.

5. PRESS GUIDANCE. TO PRESS INQUIRIES CONCERNING SEATO WE ARE INDICATING THAT THE POSITIONS TAKEN BY OTHER MEMBERS OF SEATO, ESPECIALLY THE ASIAN MEMBERS, WILL GREATLY INFLUENCE OUR OWN IDEAS AS TO THE FUTURE UTILITY OF SEATO. WE BELIEVE THE SEATO COUNCIL MEETING THIS FALL WOULD PROVIDE AN APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS SUCH MATTERS IN DETAIL. WE ARE ALSO STATING THAT WE KNOW OF NO PROPOSAL THAT THE MANILA PACT, WHICH UNDERLIES THE SEATO ORGANIZATION, BE DISSOLVED. EMBASSIES MAY WISH TO TAKE SIMILAR APPROACH TO PRESS INQUIRIES. INGERSOLL

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